

STW

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In Re Patent Application of:
LOFTUS

Serial No.: 10/725,180
Filed: 12/2/03

Group: 3745
Examiner: VERDIER, Christopher M.

Title: ROTOR SYSTEM

PRIORITY CLAIM SUBMISSION AND CERTIFIED COPY

Date: February 16, 2006

Hon. Commissioner of Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

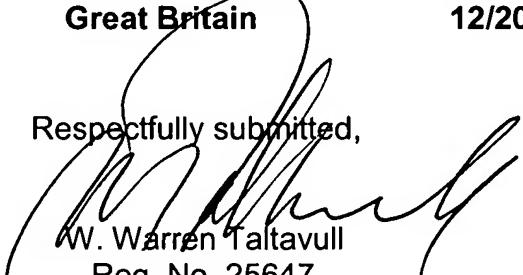
It is respectfully requested that under the provisions of 35 USC 119/365, this application be given the benefit of the foreign filing date of the following, a certified copy of which is attached hereto:

Application No.
0229702.6

Country of Origin
Great Britain

Filed
12/20/02

Respectfully submitted,


W. Warren Taltavull
Reg. No. 25647

MANELLI DENISON & SELTER PLLC
2000 M Street N.W. Suite 700
Washington D.C. 20036
202 261 1047

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)

The Patent Office
Concept House
Cardiff Road
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8QQ

the undersigned, being an officer duly authorised in accordance with Section 74(1) and (4) of the Deregulation & Contracting Out Act 1994, to sign and issue certificates on behalf of the Comptroller-General, hereby certify that annexed hereto is a true copy of the documents as originally filed in connection with the patent application identified therein.

accordance with the Patents (Companies Re-registration) Rules 1982, if a company named in this certificate and any accompanying documents has re-registered under the Companies Act 2006 with the same name as that with which it was registered immediately before re-registration save for the substitution as, or inclusion as, the last part of the name of the words "public limited company" or their equivalents in Welsh, references to the name of the company in this certificate and any accompanying documents shall be treated as references to the name with which it is so re-registered.

In accordance with the rules, the words "public limited company" may be replaced by p.l.c., plc, P.L.C. or PLC.

Re-registration under the Companies Act does not constitute a new legal entity but merely subjects the company to certain additional company law rules.

**CERTIFIED COPY OF
PRIORITY DOCUMENT**

Signed



Dated 28 October 2003

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)

THE PATENT OFFICE
D
20 DEC 2002



7/77

**Statement of inventorship and of
right to grant of a patent**

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8QQ

1. Your reference

DY3057

2. Patent application number
(if you know it)

0229702.6

20 DEC 2002

3. Full name of the or of each applicant

ROLLS-ROYCE PLC

4. Title of the invention

ROTOR SYSTEM

5. State how the applicant(s) derived the right
from the inventor(s) to be granted a patent

BY VIRTUE OF AN AGREEMENT DATED 12 NOVEMBER 2002

6. How many, if any, additional Patents Forms
7/77 are attached to this form?
(see note (c))

1

I/We believe that the person(s) named over the page (and on
any extra copies of this form) is/are the inventor(s) of the invention
which the above patent application relates to.

Signature

Date

M A GUNN

19.12.2002

8. Name and daytime telephone number of
person to contact in the United Kingdom

M A GUNN

01332 249457

Notes

- a) If you need help to fill in this form or you have any questions, please contact the Patent Office on 08459 500505.
- b) Write your answers in capital letters using black ink or you may type them.
- c) If there are more than three inventors, please write the names and addresses of the other inventors on the back of another Patents Form 7/77 and attach it to this form.
- d) When an application does not declare any priority, or declares priority from an earlier UK application, you must provide enough copies of this form so that the Patent Office can send one to each inventor who is not an applicant.
- e) Once you have filled in the form you must remember to sign and date it.

Enter the full names, addresses and postcodes of the inventors in the boxes and underline the surnames

PETER LOFTUS
23 ABBEY HILL ROAD
ALLESTREE
DERBY
DE22 2PT

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*): 412707800

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*):

Reminder

Have you signed the form?

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*):

Request for grant of a patent
NEWPORT

(See the notes on the back of this form. You can also get an explanatory leaflet from the Patent Office to help you fill in this form)

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8QQ

1. Your reference

DY3057

2. Patent application number

(The Patent Office will fill in this part)

0229702.6

20 DEC 2002

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of
each applicant (underline all surnames)ROLLS-ROYCE PLC
65 BUCKINGHAM GATE
LONDON
SW1E 6AT

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the
country/state of its incorporation ENGLAND

397002

4. Title of the invention

ROTOR SYSTEM

5. Name of your agent (if you have one)

M A GUNN

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom
to which all correspondence should be sent
(including the postcode)ROLLS-ROYCE plc
PATENTS DEPARTMENT
PO BOX 31
DERBY
DE24 8BJ

3962002

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more
earlier patent applications, give the country
and the date of filing of the or of each of these
earlier applications and (if you know it) the or
each application numberCountry .. Priority application number
(if you know it) .. Date of filing
(day / month / year)7. If this application is divided or otherwise
derived from an earlier UK application,
give the number and the filing date of
the earlier applicationNumber of earlier application
Date of filing
(day / month / year)8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right
to grant of a patent required in support of
this request? (Answer 'Yes' if:

YES

- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
- b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
- c) any named applicant is a corporate body.

See note (d))

Patents Form 1/77

9. Enter the number of sheets for any of the following items you are filing with this form.
Do not count copies of the same document

Continuation sheets of this form

Description	14	13
Claim(s)	4	
Abstract	1	
Drawing(s)	4	24

J

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77)

2 /

Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77)

1 /

Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77)

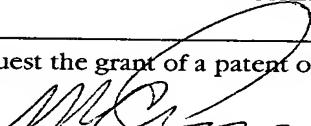
1 /

Any other documents
(please specify)

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT FEE SHEET

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature  Date

M A GUNN

19.12.2002

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

M A GUNN

01332 249457

Warning

After an application for a patent has been filed, the Comptroller of the Patent Office will consider whether publication or communication of the invention should be prohibited or restricted under Section 22 of the Patents Act 1977. You will be informed if it is necessary to prohibit or restrict your invention in this way. Furthermore, if you live in the United Kingdom, Section 23 of the Patents Act 1977 stops you from applying for a patent abroad without first getting written permission from the Patent Office unless an application has been filed at least 6 weeks beforehand in the United Kingdom for a patent for the same invention and either no direction prohibiting publication or communication has been given, or any such direction has been revoked.

Notes

- a) If you need help to fill in this form or you have any questions, please contact the Patent Office on 08459 500505.
- b) Write your answers in capital letters using black ink or you may type them.
- c) If there is not enough space for all the relevant details on any part of this form, please continue on a separate sheet of paper and write "see continuation sheet" in the relevant part(s). Any continuation sheet should be attached to this form.
- d) If you have answered 'Yes' Patents Form 7/77 will need to be filed.
- e) Once you have filled in the form you must remember to sign and date it.
- f) For details of the fee and ways to pay please contact the Patent Office.

DUPPLICATERotor System

The present invention relates to rotor systems and more particularly to rotor to casing clearance control systems used in jet engines.

The attached drawing marked "Prior Art" illustrates in schematic longitudinal cross-section a typical jet engine EN configuration. A number of rotary or, in this illustration, blade sections A, B, C, D, are provided at 10 different functional stages within the engine EN. Operation of a jet engine EN is relatively well known and clearly as illustrated involved airflows (shown by arrowheads) in order to create propulsion through combustion derived by operation of the engine EN. One of 15 the determinant factors with respect to engine operation efficiency is the amount of leakage of airflows about tips of the blades in comparison with flows through and across the blades of the engine stages A, B, C, D. A particular area of leakage is that about the distal spinning tip end 20 of each blade. However, it is necessary to provide some clearance between the distal or tip end of each blade and a casing or cowling within which the blades rotate. It is of particular importance that the gap should be predictable rather than absolutely minimised. As the blades rotate 25 they define a tip edge profile which is spaced by the gap from the casing.

It will be understood that it is generally an objective to achieve as small tip clearance as possible throughout an engines operational cycle, but particularly 30 during normal engine operation, such as at cruise. The engine operates in the cruise state for the longest periods of time and so the advantages of well regulated tip clearance will therefore be beneficial.

In accordance with the present invention there is 35 provided a rotor system comprising a rotary assembly within a casing with a gap between a tip edge of the rotary

assembly and the casing, means to close the gap until rub contact between the tip edge and the casing and means to detect rub contact whereupon control means act to open the gap to a desired value.

5 Typically, the means to detect rub contact is by detection of vibration.

Typically, the rotary assembly is formed from compressor or turbine blades secured about a rotary bearing. Normally, multiple stages of blading are provided 10 to form the rotary assembly.

Possibly, the means to close the gap between the rotary assembly and the casing is by constriction of the rotary assembly and/or casing. Such constriction may be radial constriction. Alternatively, constriction of the 15 casing may be by tangential displacement towards the centre of the casing. Constriction of the casing may be through a single constriction cuff or through multiple constriction cuffs to provide respective casing segments between those cuffs. The control means may be arranged to act upon 20 individual casing segments in order to open the gap to the desired value.

Possibly, the means to close the gap between the rotary assembly and the casing is by variable cooling of the rotary assembly and/or the casing in order to 25 precipitate constriction of that rotary assembly or casing until the gap achieves the desired value.

Alternatively, the means to close the gap between the rotary assembly and the casing is by utilising eccentric cam displacement means associated with respective segments 30 of the casing in order that by rotation of said eccentric cam means specified displacement of that segment is achieved to present the desired value of the gap.

Normally, the control means will also control the means to close the gap between the rotary assembly and the 35 casing.

Alternatively, the tip edge of the rotary assembly may

be arranged to radially expand by reversing the means to close the gap until rub contact.

Preferably, the means to detect rub contact comprises at least one sensor appropriately located to determine 5 vibration initiation due to rub contact throughout the casing. Advantageously, the means to detect vibration comprises a multiple sensor system for more sensitive operation and/or more rapid determination of rub contact and/or facilitating determination of rub contact position 10 between the tip edge and the casing. Possibly, the control means will act dependent upon the means to detect vibration in order to selectively open the gap to the desired value dependent upon the vibration detected. The desired value and/or speed of opening may depend upon the severity of 15 vibration and/or its frequency and/or any harmonics.

Possibly, the means to detect vibration will allow determination of the point of rub contact by a triangulation technique. This triangulation technique may depend upon the signals received from several vibration 20 sensors or through a consideration of primary (direct) vibration recovery and reflected vibration recovery from reflective surfaces determined by the means to detect vibration as a wave harmonic. The means to detect vibration or the control means may utilise time of flight 25 or propagation determination in order to approximate rub contact position between the tip edge and the casing.

Also in accordance with the present invention there is provided a method of regulating a gap between a rotary assembly and a casing in an engine, the method comprising 30 closing the gap until rub contact between the rotary assembly and the casing, detecting rub contact and opening the gap to a desired value.

Normally, detecting rub contact is by determination of vibration.

35 Further in accordance with the present invention there is provided an engine including a system as claimed above.

Additionally in accordance with the present invention there is provided an engine operated in accordance with the method described above.

Typically, the system or method as described above 5 will initiate rub contact periodically in order to appropriately set the gap for efficient operation. Possibly, gap determination will be performed at steady, cruise conditions. Generally, the means for detecting vibration will be operational during all periods of system 10 activity such that closing of the gap between the tip edge and the casing other than through the means for closing deliberately that gap can be determined and the control means thereby open the gap as required to avoid detrimental on-going rub contact and abrasion of the tip edge and/or 15 the casing.

Possibly, specific singer areas or elements may be provided in the casing in order to provide distinct vibration response to rub contact. Such distinct vibration from each singer element being determinable by the means to 20 detect vibration and the control means by knowledge of each singer element location being able to determine the location of rub contact. These singer elements or areas being more readily replaceable or providing less abrasion or providing less mutual damage to the tip edge and the 25 bulk of the casing.

Embodiments of the present invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic longitudinal cross-section of an 30 engine incorporating a system in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a schematic operation diagram of a system in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a schematic front cross-section of a first 35 casing configuration;

Fig. 4 is a schematic front cross-section of a second

casing configuration; and,

Fig. 5 is a schematic front cross-section of a third casing configuration.

Referring to Fig. 1 showing a longitudinal cross-section of an engine. As can be seen the engine 1 is substantially similar to that depicted as "prior art" except that acoustic detectors 2 are located about a casing 3 within which a rotary assembly 4 comprising banks of fan blades is arranged to rotate. The arrowheads depict airflows within the engine 1 which are substantially conventional in nature. Although described with reference to vibration detection it will be understood that rub contact may also be determined by localised temperature or pressure variations if appropriate sensors are provided and located about the casing 3 at similar positions to those for the acoustic detectors 2.

The engine 1 incorporates a low pressure compressor stage 5 which receives air through an air inlet 6 and directs it (arrowheads 7) to a high pressure compressor stage 8. The low pressure compressor 5 utilises a number of fan blades supported upon a rotary shaft between a front bearing 9 and a rear bearing 10. The airflows (arrowheads 7) are forced and compressed through the high pressure compressor stage 8 and air transfer ports 11 with airflows depicted as arrowheads 12 and arrowheads 13 respectively illustrating intermediate airflow and high pressure airflow. It will be noted that there is also further low pressure airflow through arrowheads 7 which pass through orifices in the rotary shaft in order to provide air cooling. There is a high pressure turbine 14 provided to drive the high pressure compressor stage 8 whilst a low pressure turbine 15 acts through a rotary drive shaft to drive the low pressure compressor stage 5. Respective bearings 16, 17 are provided in order to support and allow rotation of the respective turbines 14, 15. There is also a location bearing assembly 18. The rotary assembly 4 is

supported between bearings 18 and 20.

There are a number of rotary members provided in rotary assemblies generally held within cowlings or casings such as casing 3 with a gap between a tip edge constituted by the blades of each rotary assembly and an inner surface of the cowling or casing. As indicated previously, there are significant benefits with respect to engine 1 operating efficiency if the gap between the rotary assembly periphery, or tip edge and the casing is closely regulated.

10 Singer elements or areas 19 may be provided in or on the casing 3. These elements or areas are shaped, configured or formed from material compositions which provide a distinct vibration on rub contact. These individual elements and areas 19 may be specifically 15 identified by the sensors 2 so that the area of rub contact can be determined.

In accordance with the present invention sensors 2 are provided about the surface of the casing 3. It will be appreciated that similar systems could be provided with 20 respective sensors to detect vibration about other rotary assemblies such as the low pressure compressor 5, the high pressure turbine 14 or the low pressure turbine 15. The sensors 2 are generally located in order to detect vibration in the casing and may be tuned in order to avoid 25 specific vibrations for reasons other than in accordance with tip to casing gap regulation through rub contact.

In accordance with the present invention the casing 3 is displaced inwardly towards the blades and in particular the tips of the blades from which the rotary assembly, in 30 this case the low pressure compressor stage 4, is constructed. This inward displacement or closing of the gap between the blade tips and the casing 3 can be achieved in a number of ways. Figs. 3 to 5 illustrate schematically 35 three possible configurational approaches to constriction of the casing in order to close the gap but it will also be appreciated that other mechanisms may be used or

alternatively the blades of the rotary assembly (low pressure compressor stage 4) could be moved outwards if possible to close the gap.

In Fig. 3 a casing 33 is inwardly constricted through 5 a choke collar junction or cuff 34 in which a regulator screw 35 is turned within screw threads located in lip members 36, 37 in order to narrow the gap between these lip members 36, 37 and therefore reduce the circumference of the casing 33. This constriction is relatively crude with 10 greater inward displacement in side portions of the casing 33 in comparison with about the collar junction or cuff 34 and opposite that junction 34 in the casing 33.

Fig. 4 illustrates a second mechanism for constriction of a casing 43 in which distinct segments of the casing 43 have angled overlap junctions or cuffs 44 such that by 15 rotation of the respective segments the degree of overlap can be increased or reduced to alter the circumference of the casing 43 in the manner of an iris. Thus, in operation the casing 43 would move towards a rotary member (not 20 shown) in order to close the gap between that rotary assembly and the casing 43. Clearly the more overlap junctions 44 provided in the casing 43 the greater control 25 of constriction uniformity and so accuracy. It will also be understood that the overlap junctions 44 will provide a partial seal to the cowling 43 in order to limit airflow leakage through the junctions 44 in comparison with the collar junction 34 described in Fig. 3.

Fig. 5 illustrates a casing 53 in which specific segments of the casing 53 are independently supported and 30 presented such that each segment can be moved inward and away from a centre of the casing 53 in order to constrict that casing 53 and therefore close the gap with a rotary assembly (not shown) located within the casing 53. Normally, cover seals 54 will be provided in order to 35 inhibit leakage through the inherent gap between segments of the casing 53. Such movement of each segment could be

achieved by presenting the casing 53 in a closed chamber 55 so that increases or decreases in pressure move the segments. Furthermore, individual segments may be moved by placing a bag (broken lines 56) or otherwise provoking 5 sealed chamber which can be inflated or deflated for each segment.

Alternative means to vary the gap between the rotary assembly and its casing are described in European Patent Publication No. 079390 (Rolls Royce Plc) and U.S. Patent 10 No. 4330234 (Rolls Royce Ltd). In European Patent Publication No. 0790390 variation in the clearance gap between a rotary assembly and its casing is achieved through additional cooling of a stator disk upon which the elements of the rotary assembly are secured. Such 15 selective cooling of the stator disk allows that disk to contract or expand in order thereby to alter the tip edge clearance created by the elements secured to that stator disk in the rotary assembly and therefore vary the clearance gap between that tip edge or periphery of the 20 rotary assembly and its casing. In U.S. Patent No. 4330234 the casing comprises a number of casing segments supported upon respective eccentric cam mechanisms whereby rotation creates axial displacement of an angularly presented casing segment. Such eccentric rotation thereby alters the 25 angular relationship and therefore clearance gap between a peripheral or tip edge of a rotary assembly beneath the casing segment.

From the description and drawings provided with respect to Figs. 3 to 5 along with EP0790390 and US4330234 30 it will be appreciated that the constriction of a casing or other alteration in the clearance gap can be achieved in a number of ways and utilising a range of mechanisms. In general, the more segments provided for the casing the more accurate and controlled will be the constriction of the 35 casing. In accordance with the present invention the degree of closure of the gap between the rotary assembly

and the casing will be in the order of a few microns until rub contact. In such circumstances, it will be appreciated that the constriction provided must be accurately controlled and also allow rapid reversal or opening of the 5 gap in order to prevent damage to the rotary assembly and/or the casing through prolonged rub contact between them.

As indicated above, in accordance with the present invention the gap between the rotary assembly and the 10 casing is reduced until there is rub contact therebetween. This rub contact creates vibration in the casing which is detected by the sensors 2 appropriately located about the casing 3. The sensors 2 are in relatively low hazard areas of the engine 1 such that their operation will not be 15 unpredictably or excessively variable dependent upon engine 1 operational state. Although a number of sensors 2 is the preferred arrangement of the present system it may be possible to provide a single sensor which acts to determine vibration due to rub contact at any point between the 20 rotary assembly and casing. Clearly, where the casing is segmented as depicted in Figs. 4 and 5 it is preferable for there to be at least one sensor for each segment of the casing.

Principally in accordance with the present invention, 25 once rub contact between the rotary assembly and the casing is determined through detection of vibration there will be an immediate opening of the gap to a desired value. This desired value will in principle be determined in order to achieve engine performance or efficiency. It should be 30 noted that the specific gap provided between the rotary assembly and the casing may vary during different engine cycles, for example the gap may be narrower during engine decelerations and wider during engine accelerations. The engine state or required performance will be set by 35 appropriate controls and further sensors and detectors of such parameters as temperature, airflow and fuel

consumption.

It will be appreciated that an engine 1 through an operational cycle will be expected to provide different power output as well as be subjected to varying 5 temperatures. These factors will alter component dimensions materially and so in accordance with the present invention typically there will be a gap regulation episode at predetermined time periods or at specific temperature levels in order to ensure that the gap between the rotary 10 assembly and the casing is appropriately set and regulated for best engine performance and efficiency. Clearly, these gap regulation episodes involving closing the gap to rub contact, detecting vibration and retreating to open the gap to a desired value will only occur during periods of 15 relatively stable engine operation. Nevertheless, the means for detection of vibration due to rub contact will be maintained such that if such rub contact is determined during operation a controller can then immediately arrange for gap opening by displacement of the casing or rotary 20 assembly contraction to eliminate such rub contact.

An engine 1 through its life will be subject to wear and mechanical distortion of components due to creep etc. The present regime for gap regulation will allow adjustment of the casing to rotary assembly position to ensure that a 25 desired gap between them is maintained despite such ageing of the engine 1 or at least extend the operational life of that engine 1 between maintenance or service requirements.

Generally provided there is high quality alignment it will be appreciated that the rotary assembly will be 30 centrally located within the casing and so ideally when the gap is closed there would be rub contact throughout the periphery of the rotary member at a tip edge profile formed by the ends of the blades with the inner surface of the casing. However, in practice there will generally be a sag 35 or slight misalignment such that rub contact takes place at a specific position. Identification of that position will

enable specific response to be achieved to open the gap at the position of rub contact rather than generally throughout the tip edge and the casing. It will be understood to achieve such specific opening of the gap it will be necessary for each individual segment of the casing to be specifically displaced radially away from the rotary assembly. As indicated previously this can be achieved by an appropriate mechanical linkage or by use of inflation pockets or bags for each individual segment. These bags are inflated or deflated as required against a bias such as a mechanical spring in order to provide segment position as required.

In order to determine specific location of rub contact it will be appreciated that a technique based upon multiple sensor detection will normally be required. Thus, possibly by a triangulation or time of propagation technique it may be possible to identify a specific rub contact location. It will be understood that a high degree of accuracy may not be required as normally the only relative adjustment will be whole casing or possibly single segment displacement. Thus, mere allocation of rub contact to one segment of the casing may be all the accuracy required. This as indicated previously may be through a triangulation or time of flight technique from a number of sensors or alternatively by providing one sensor or a combination of sensors for each individual segment of the casing so that determination of those sensors for that segment in comparison with no detection of vibration in other segments by other sensors can thereby locate the specific point of rub contact and so achieve opening of the gap as required at that locality rather than generally. It will also be understood that a knowledge of reflective surfaces may also allow determination through reflection harmonics by the vibration sensors of rub contact position.

In order to provide a degree of redundancy it is normal practice to provide two or more sensors for a

particular vibration determination in the casing such that failure by one sensor will not render the system ineffective. Normally, these sensors will act as a set with polling of vibration determinations to provide 5 confirmation of vibration consistent with rub contact and therefore to ensure that the control means acts to open the gap as required.

Fig. 2 illustrates a blade system in accordance with the present invention. Thus, a controller 21 is connected 10 to sensors 22a, 22b, 22c to detect vibration consistent with rub contact between the rotary assembly and the casing. The controller 21 is also connected to a drive 23 which includes gap closing means 24 and gap opening means 25. The drive means 23 as described previously may be a 15 number of mechanical or pneumatic elements for displacing the casing relative to the rotary member in order to close and open the gap therebetween.

In operation, the controller 21 will instruct the drive means 23 such that the gap closing means 24 closes 20 the gap between the casing and the rotary assembly until a point occurs when the sensors 22 detect rub contact and provide an appropriate signal to the controller 21. At this point the controller 21 will then instruct the drive means 23 such that the gap opening means 25 opens the gap 25 to a desired spacing value for efficient engine operation or to achieve a desired performance. This displacement by the gap opening means 25 will be a fixed value determined for that engine operation. Nevertheless, the controller 21 may receive override signals from other inputs 26 (shown in 30 dotted line) which may alter the necessary or desired gap. These other inputs 26 may include engine temperature, desired fuel consumption, airflow rate or other factors.

As indicated, previously the sensors 22 for determination of vibration consistent with rub contact will 35 be appropriately distributed around the casing in order to rapidly detect such rub contact.

It will be appreciated that the gap closing means 24 will generally act relatively slowly in order to ensure that the rub contact is not overly aggressive. The gap will be closed over a relatively long period of time using 5 small increments until rub contact is achieved. However, the gap opening means will generally act relatively quickly in order to relieve the rub contact as soon as possible and so prevent damage or abrasion to the casing or blade tips. Generally, the displacement range for the gap closing means 10 will be in the order of several microns and the eventual desired spacing value will also similarly be only in the order of a few microns. It will be understood that generally the gap between the rotary assembly and the casing will be substantially that required for efficient 15 operation or performance and so the present system is acting to provide a reference datum in use as opposed to that assumed from tolerance stack-up on assembly. Rub contact will be considered as a zero spacing such that the gap opening means 25 will then, dependent upon its accuracy 20 of displacement, provide the specified gap for engine efficiency and performance.

Whilst endeavouring in the foregoing specification to draw attention to those features of the invention believed to be of particular importance it should be understood that 25 the Applicant claims protection in respect of any patentable feature or combination of features hereinbefore referred to and/or shown in the drawings whether or not particular emphasis has been placed thereon.

CLAIMS

1. A rotor system comprising a rotary assembly (4) within a casing (3) with a gap between a tip edge of the rotary assembly (4) and the casing (3), means (24, 35, 44, 55, 56) to close the gap until rub contact between the tip edge and the casing (3) and means (2) to detect rub contact whereupon control means (21) act to open the gap to a desired value.
- 10 2. A system as claimed in claim 1 wherein the means (2) to detect rub contact is by detection of vibration.
3. A system as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the rotary assembly (4) is formed from compressor or turbine blades secured about a rotary bearing (18, 20).
- 15 4. A system as claimed in claim 3 wherein the rotor blades are formed into a cascade of blade rows in order to provide the rotary assembly (4).
5. A system as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the means (24, 35, 44, 55, 56) to close the gap between the rotary assembly (4) and the casing (3) is by constriction of the casing (3).
- 20 6. A system as claimed in claim 5 wherein the constriction is radial.
7. A system as claimed in claim 5 wherein the constriction is by tangential displacement towards the centre of the casing (3).
- 25 8. A system as claimed in any of claims 5, 6 or 7 wherein the constriction is through a single cuff (34).
9. A system as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4 wherein the means to close the gap between the rotary assembly (4) and the casing (3) is by selective cooling of the rotary assembly (4) whereby relative constriction or expansion of that rotary assembly dependent upon the selective cooling adjusts the position of the tip edge as required in order
- 30 35 to achieve the desire value of the gap.
10. A system as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4 wherein

the means to close the gap between the rotary assembly and the casing is by axial displacement of casing segments mounted upon an eccentric rotation arrangement whereby rotation of the eccentric rotation arrangement alters the 5 angular presentation between each segment and the rotary assembly in order to vary the gap between them to the desired value.

11. A system as claimed in any of claims 5, 6, 7 or 10 wherein the constriction is through multiple constriction 10 cuffs (44) to provide respective casing segments between those cuffs, each individual casing segment being displaceable in order to provide constriction of the casing (43).

12. A system as claimed in claim 11 wherein the control 15 means (21) is arranged to act upon individual casing segments (53) in order to open the gap to the desired value.

13. A system as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the control means (21) also controls the means (24, 35, 44, 55, 20 56) to close the gap between the rotary assembly (4) and the casing (3).

14. A system as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the means (2) to detect rub contact comprises at least one sensor appropriately located to determine rub contact 25 throughout the casing.

15. A system as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the means (2) to detect rub contact comprises a multiple sensor system for more sensitive operation and/or more rapid determination of rub contact and/or facilitate the 30 determination of rub contact position between the tip edge and the casing.

16. A system as claimed in claim 2 and any claim dependent thereon wherein the control means (21) acts dependent upon the means (2) to detect vibration in order to selectively 35 open the gap to the desired value dependent upon the vibration detected.

17. A system as claimed in claim 16 wherein the desired value for the gap and/or the speed of opening is dependent upon the severity of vibration and/or its frequency and/or any harmonics in the vibration detected by the means (2) to 5 detect vibration.

18. A system as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the means (2) to detect rub contact will allow determination of the point of rub contact by a triangulation technique.

19. A system as claimed in claim 18 when dependent upon 10 claim 2 wherein the triangulation technique depends upon signals received from several vibration sensors (2) or through a consideration of primary (direct) vibration recovery and reflected vibration recovery from reflective surfaces determined by the means (2) to detect vibration as 15 a wave harmonic.

20. A system as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the means (2) to detect rub contact or the control means (21) may utilise time of flight or propagation determination in order to approximate rub contact position between the tip 20 edge and the casing (3).

21. A system as claimed in any preceding claim wherein specific singer areas or elements are provided in the casing (3) in order to provide distinct rub contact responses to rub contact which can be determined by the 25 means (2) to detect rub contact and/or the control means (21).

22. A system as claimed in claim 21 wherein such distinct responses from each singer element is determinable by the means (2) to detect rub contact and/or the control means 30 (21) by knowledge of each singer element location being utilised to determine the approximate location of rub contact between the tip edge and the casing (3).

23. A system as claimed in claim 21 or 22 wherein the singer elements or areas are more readily replaceable or 35 provide less abrasion or provide less mutual damage to the tip edge and the casing (3) during rub contact.

24. A rotor system substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.
25. A method of regulating a gap between a rotary assembly (4) and a casing (3) in an engine (1), the method comprising closing the gap until rub contact between the rotary assembly (4) and the casing (3), detecting rub contact and opening the gap thereafter to a desired value.
26. A method as claimed in claim 25 wherein detecting rub contact is by determination of vibration upon such rub contact.
- 10 27. An engine (1) including a system as claimed in any of claims 1 to 24.
28. An engine (1) operated in accordance with the method as claimed in claim 25 or 26.
- 15 29. A rotor system calibration arrangement comprising a rotor system as claimed in any of claims 1 to 24 whereby the control means includes means to periodically set a reference datum for the desired value of the gap and means to operate an open loop control strategy dependent upon responses from the means to detect rub contact.
- 20 30. Any novel subject matter or combination including novel subject matter disclosed herein, whether or not within the scope of or relating to the same invention as any of the preceding claims.

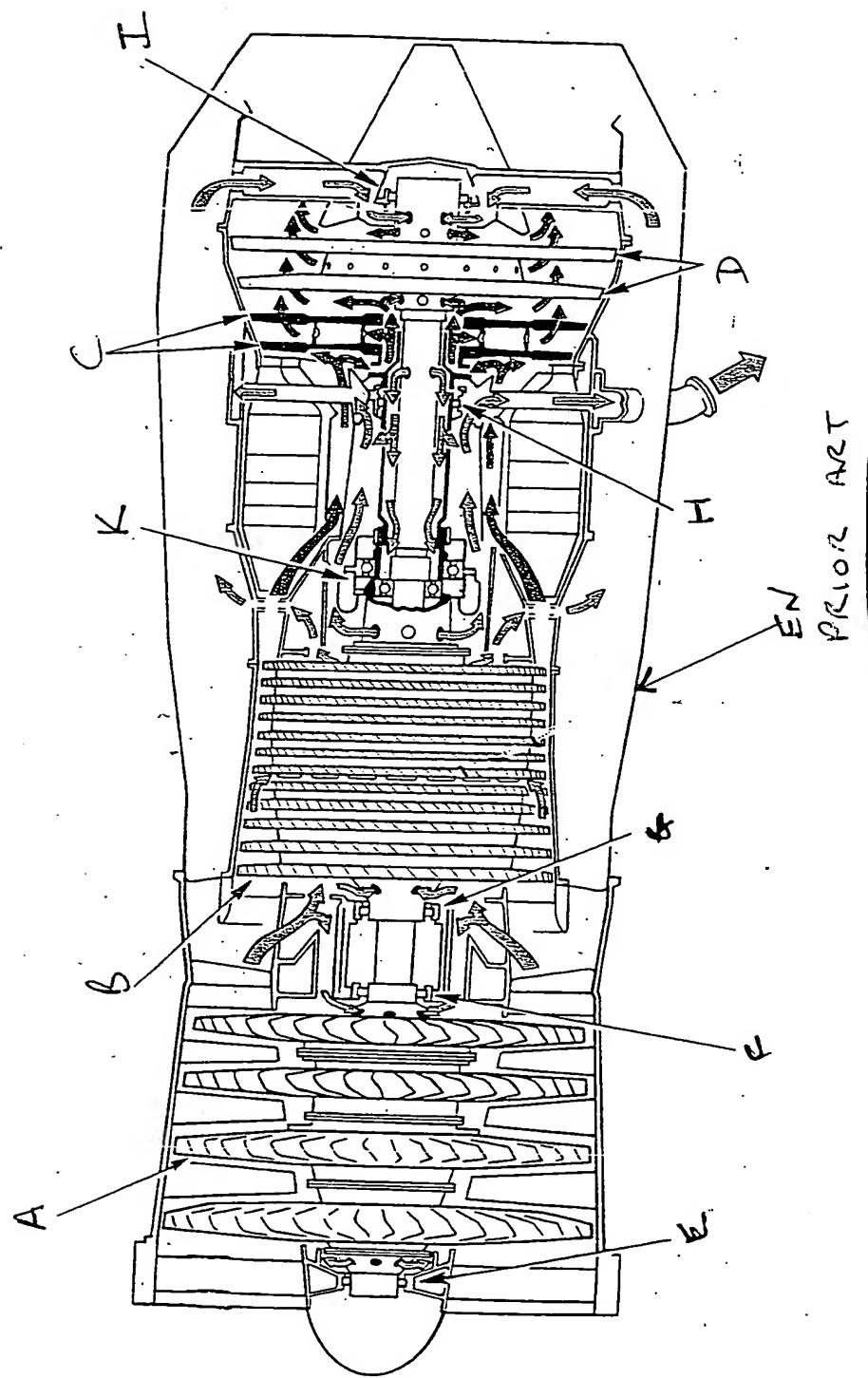
THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)

ABSTRACTRotor System

5

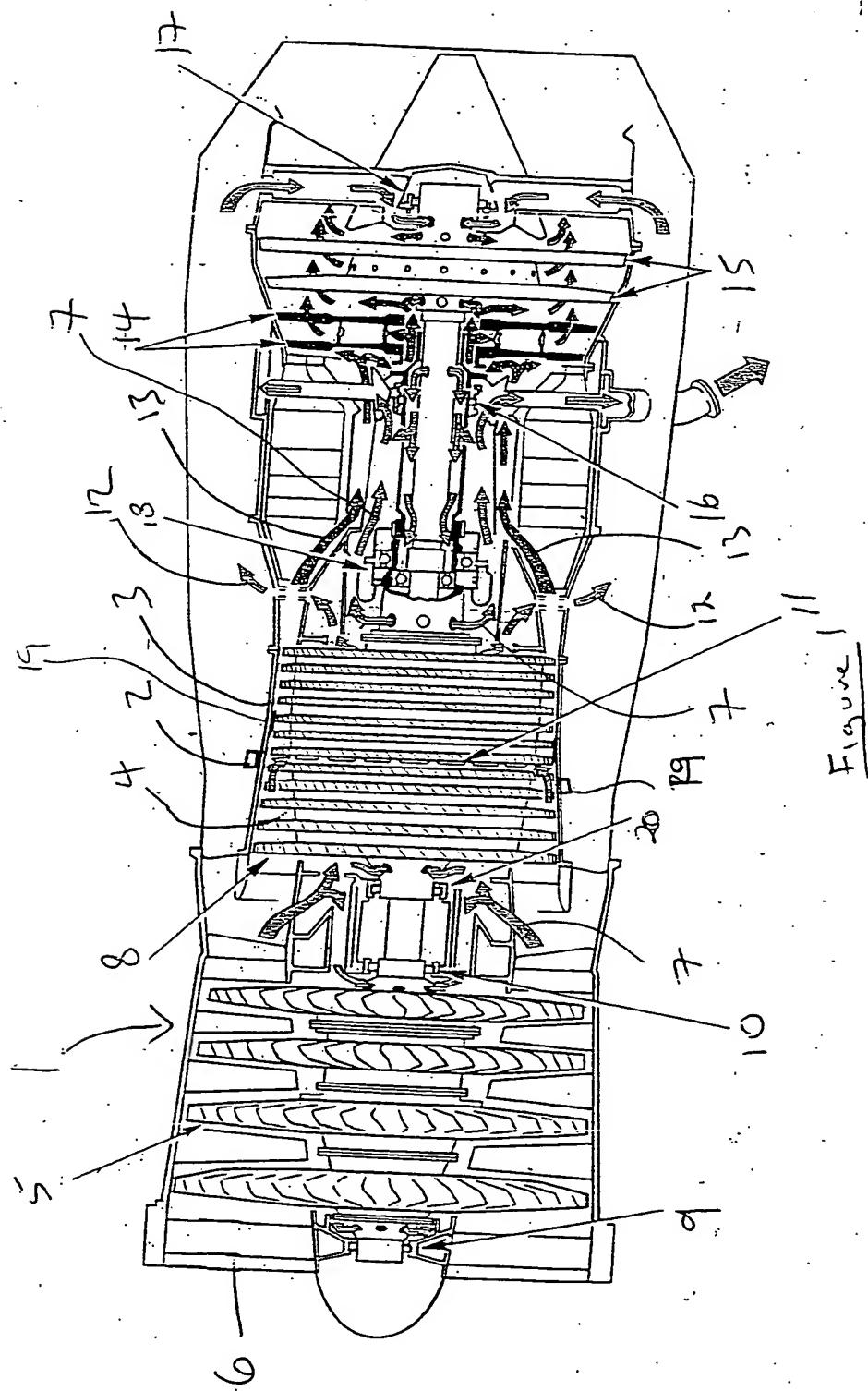
A rotor system is provided whereby a rotary assembly such as a fan blade combination (4) in a jet engine (1) is brought into rub contact with a casing (3) such that sensors (2) detect vibration. The casing (3) is then 10 retreated in order to open the gap to a desired value for engine (1) performance. In such circumstances, the rub contact position is defined as a base datum reference from which gap opening means (25) can displace the casing (3) in order to provide the specified gap for engine performance 15 and efficiency.

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)



THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)

2/4



THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)

3/4

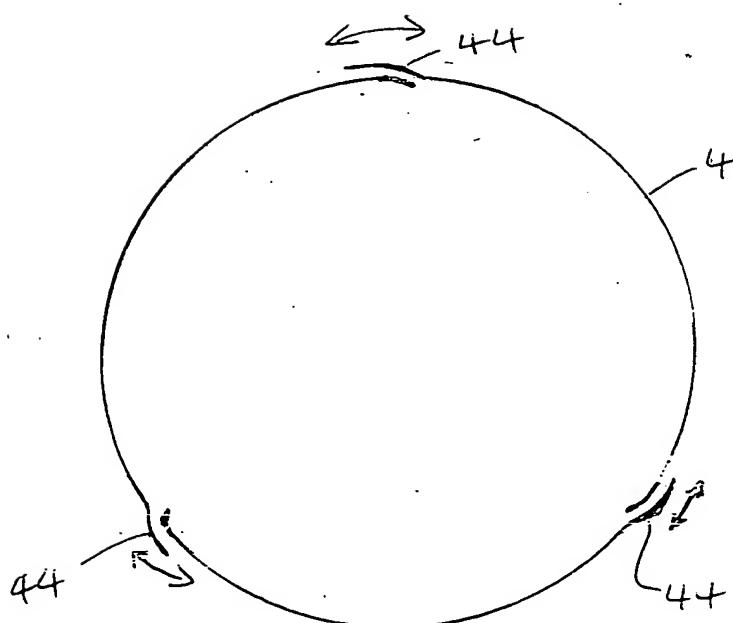
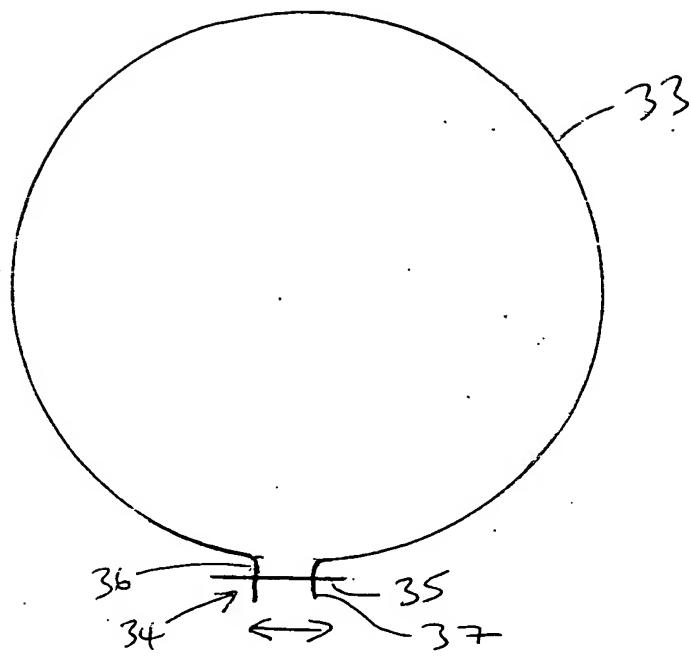


Figure 4

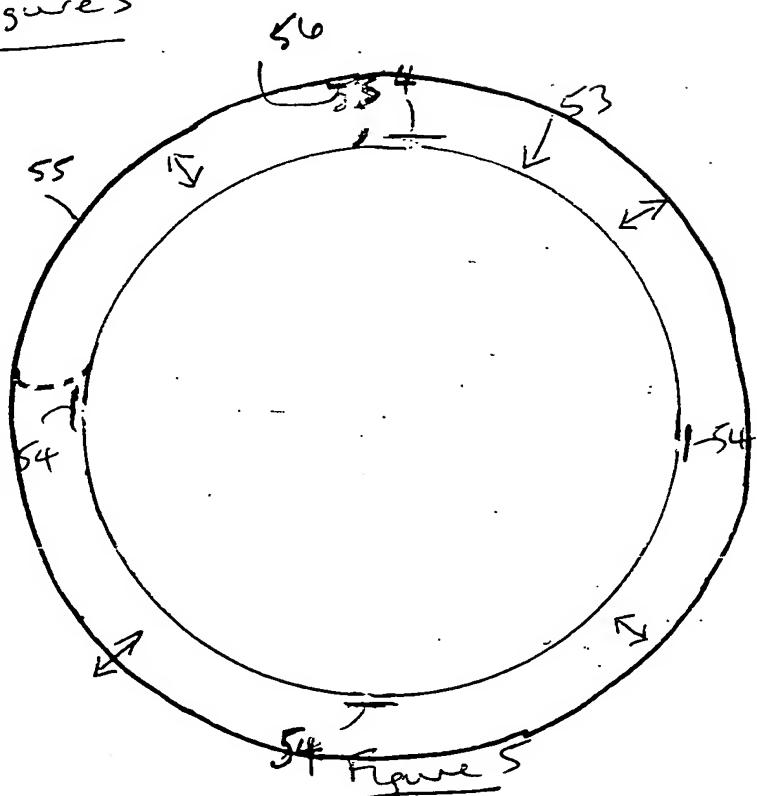


Figure 5

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)

4/4

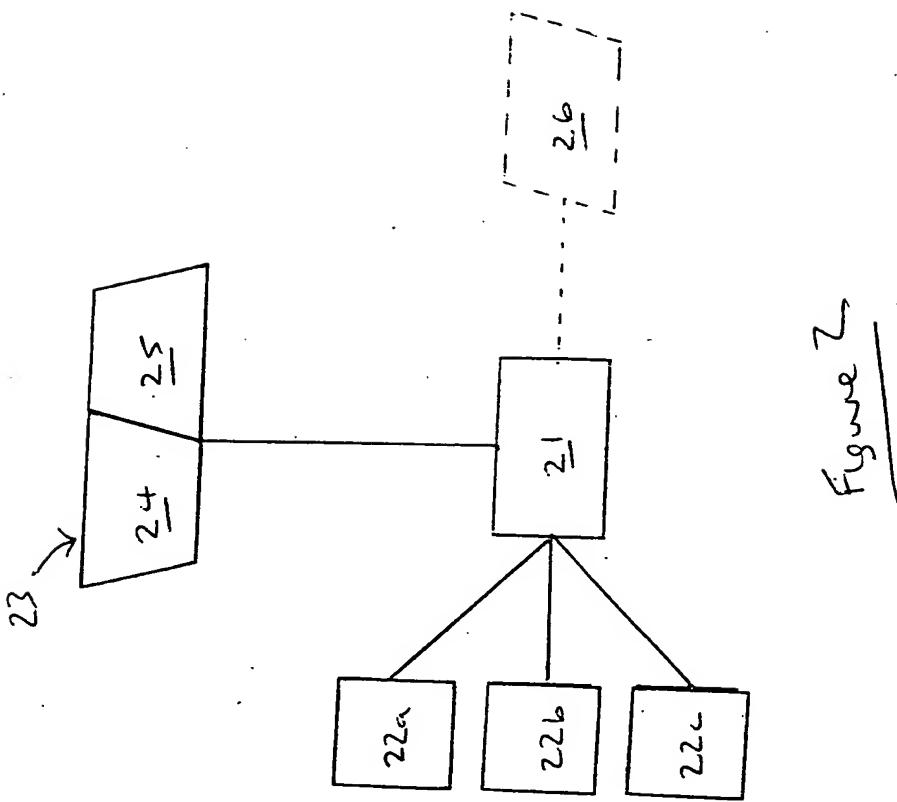


Figure 2

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)